

Always Use Best Diving Practices in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES

GRAY'S REEF

<http://graysreef.noaa.gov>

The waters of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary are filled with life! A variety of unique habitats are waiting to be explored, each harboring a spectacular array of plants and animals. The national marine sanctuaries are special places—coastal and undersea counterparts to our national parks that are protected for their biological diversity or cultural significance.

The primary role of a marine sanctuary is to protect its natural and cultural features while allowing people to use and enjoy the ocean in a sustainable way. To protect its natural wonders, activities that could harm the health of the sanctuary, like oil drilling or ocean dumping, are prohibited. The sanctuary also facilitates many uses, such as fishing, diving and boating.

Protect Gray's Reef While You Dive

To make your dives more enjoyable and safe, and to help protect this national treasure, please:

Plan your dive well.

Diving these waters is challenging. You may want to hire a local divemaster or instructor to accompany you on your first dives. Know the unique characteristics of a dive site in advance, so that you don't become disoriented or lost. Before you dive, designate entry and exit points as well as contingency exit points in case conditions change unexpectedly. For specific dive site information, consult dive stores, charts or local divers.

Control your buoyancy.

Mastering buoyancy control means your dives will be safer and less strenuous. This practice will also minimize the risk of inadvertently touching the bottom floor or rock ledges on the first descent.

Streamline your equipment.

Keeping gear close to your body reduces drag and the chances of entanglement. Sea life is everywhere and can be harmed by the kick of a fin, bump of a tank, or knock of the hand.

Keep a safe distance from marine animals.

While on the way to your chosen dive site and while in the water you can observe wildlife including fish, dolphin, sea birds, sea turtles and an occasional North Atlantic right whale. Federal rules require that you get no closer to a North Atlantic right whale than 500 yards.

Do not touch or take anything.

Your slightest touch can disturb marine life. Removing rock or shell for the sake of a souvenir can disrupt this fragile system. Do not touch the reef, the corals or sponges. Removing rocks, sand and living or dead invertebrates and algae—including lobsters—is against the law in Gray's Reef. For a complete list of regulations, see <http://graysreef.noaa.gov/newregs.html>.

Protect Gray's Reef While on Land: Get Involved

Divers are privileged to witness the diversity and abundance of marine life in our National Marine Sanctuaries. Share the wonder and promote responsible ocean stewardship by getting involved in some of these activities:

- Join a dive club or group that promotes education and conservation.
- Try your hand at photography or videography, and use your undersea images to inspire others to learn more about the ocean.
- Keep yourself informed about ocean issues. Be an advocate for responsible ocean management by making your voice known to management authorities or elected officials.
- Take part in fish counts or underwater surveys that can help scientists and fisheries managers better understand changes in the marine ecosystem.
- Participate in beach or underwater clean-ups. Keep all trash out of the ocean.

